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For Immediate Release

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76% of Wheat Growers Approve Biotech Petition

From Commodity Classic – More than three-quarters of wheat growers responding to a recent National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) survey approved a petition supporting the commercialization of biotechnology in wheat.

The survey was commissioned by NAWG as a project of the NAWG Foundation to measure and document the level of support of biotech trait commercialization among wheat growers.

Anecdotal evidence has long suggested many wheat producers would like biotech traits in their arsenal, and national wheat organizations support biotech commercialization. However, private technology providers need to be assured of ground-level support for their efforts before undertaking the decade-long, multimillion-dollar path toward commercialization of a trait.


“Until now, there has only been speculation about the breadth of grower support for biotechnology in wheat,” said NAWG CEO Daren Coppock. “This petition was designed to gather those answers from across our wheat producing areas, and now we have an objective and clear answer.”

To date, the survey has enjoyed a 32 percent response rate, with approval rates similar across states and farm sizes. The survey was mailed in January and February to about 21,000 producers with more than 500 acres of wheat and 1,000 acres in total production.

More information about the petition and survey is available online at www.wheatworld.org/biotech. Items posted there include the full petition language, an expanded Q and A about the effort and numerical break-outs of results by state and farm size.

NAWG leaders have scheduled a media availability on the biotech survey for Thursday from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. local time at the Wheat Industry Booth (# 806) at the Commodity Classic trade show. Additional media inquiries may be directed toward Melissa George Kessler at mkessler@wheatworld.org

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 National Association of Wheat Growers

NAWG Petition Database Analysis

	Number In Database	Response Number	Response %	Agree	Agree %	Disagree	Disagree %
Database Totals							
Database Total	21,262						
Total Response Number	6,907						
Total Response %	32%						
Total Agree	5,272						
Total % Agree	76%						
Total Disagree	1,635						
Total % Disagree	24%						
Wheat Acre Breakdowns							
Total Wheat Acres Responded	9,770,822						
Total Wheat Acres Agree	7,538,332						
500-999 Wheat Acres	10,030	2,691	27%	2,005	75%	686	25%
1,000-2,500 Wheat Acres	9,630	3,574	37%	2,763	77%	811	23%
Over 2,500 Wheat Acres	1,602	642	40%	504	79%	138	21%
State Breakdowns							
Alabama	28	9	32%	7	78%	2	22%
Arkansas	424	66	16%	56	85%	10	15%
Arizona	60	15	25%	11	73%	4	27%
California	310	72	23%	66	92%	6	8%
Colorado	783	264	34%	224	85%	40	15%
Georgia	89	18	20%	12	67%	6	33%
Iowa	8	2	25%	0	0%	2	100%
Idaho	461	152	33%	135	89%	17	11%
Illinois	172	44	25%	27	61%	17	39%
Indiana	53	11	21%	8	73%	3	27%
Kansas	4,530	1,448	32%	1,099	76%	349	24%
Kentucky	91	23	25%	19	83%	4	17%
Maryland	38	9	24%	6	67%	3	33%

February 17, 2009

Michigan	73	24	33%	21	88%	3	12%
Minnesota	864	322	37%	216	67%	106	33%
Missouri	277	56	20%	44	79%	12	21%
Montana	1,885	696	37%	529	76%	167	24%
North Carolina	149	43	29%	36	84%	7	16%
North Dakota	3,852	1,264	33%	870	69%	394	31%
Nebraska	653	213	33%	172	81%	41	19%
New Mexico	173	38	22%	35	92%	3	8%
Ohio	77	28	36%	20	71%	8	29%
Oklahoma	1,754	651	37%	514	79%	137	21%
Oregon	262	100	38%	83	83%	17	17%
South Carolina	1	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
South Dakota	1,263	336	27%	250	74%	86	26%
Texas	1,926	612	32%	481	79%	131	21%
Virginia	88	32	36%	25	78%	7	22%
Washington	842	334	40%	288	86%	46	14%
Wyoming	76	25	33%	18	72%	7	28%

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WHEAT INDUSTRY BIOTECHNOLOGY PRINCIPLES FOR COMMERCIALIZATION

November 2008

The U.S. wheat industry recognizes the benefits and value which could be created within the wheat chain through the prudent application of modern biotechnology. U.S. wheat producers will support commercialization of transgenic wheat traits after thorough review and development of a commercialization plan that facilitates commercialization with minimal market disruption. We support the ability of our customers to make purchases based on their preferences for specific traits, classes, qualities, and characteristics. We will work diligently to assure that commercially achievable customer preferences are met.

The U.S. wheat industry will support commercialization of transgenic wheat traits when:

1. The technology provider initiates an informative dialogue with the USW/NAWG Joint Biotechnology Committee (JBC) prior to submitting for regulatory approvals in the U.S. This dialogue will allow our organizations to initiate education and outreach activities to both domestic and international customers, and to provide the technology provider with practical information intended to facilitate commercialization with minimal or no market disruption.
2. Regulatory approvals for food and feed use must be secured in major wheat export markets that will be affected where a functioning regulatory system exists. Major export markets are defined as those which represent at least five percent of the normal export volume of U.S. wheat, based on a five year moving average at the time a provider begins the regulatory process in the United States. In countries where there is no viable regulatory approval system, technology providers will make regulatory submissions promptly when those systems become functional.
3. Commercialization of the trait must not impair the ability of non-transgenic wheat to meet commercially recognized thresholds for the low-level presence of transgenic traits. Appropriate international tolerances for transgenic wheat in non-transgenic shipments must be established and accepted in major export markets. Anticipated thresholds range from 0.9% to 5.0%.
4. An accurate, economical and timely trait detection test must be provided by the trait developer prior to commercialization.
5. The primary responsibility for education and outreach for new traits will remain with the technology provider. USW and NAWG will actively help seek buyer acceptance and will provide guidance, assistance and resources.
6. The technology provider must demonstrate stewardship of the technology, including education and outreach to growers to assure compliance with agronomic and grower stewardship practices specific to the trait.
7. We have examined both certified seed and point-of-delivery value capture models. While there are advantages and disadvantages of either approach, we believe the certified seed model will be most acceptable to the value chain and is the preferred approach. Investment in agricultural technology by private parties requires a return on that investment. We support the protection of intellectual property, including education about the importance of complying with seed and stewardship contract provisions and enforcement of those provisions when necessary. Technology traits should be encouraged for adaption into public wheat varieties.

WHEAT INDUSTRY BIOTECHNOLOGY POSITION STATEMENT

Biotechnological research holds great promise for the future, and the U.S. wheat industry recognizes these advancements. In preparation for the future commercialization of biotechnologically-derived wheat, we take the following positions:

1. We support and will work to ensure the ability of wheat producers to make planting and marketing choices based on economic, agronomic, and market factors.
2. We support the ability of our wheat customers to make purchases on the basis of specific traits. We commit ourselves to the principle that our customers' needs are vitally important.
3. We support and will assist in the development by all segments of the industry of an orderly marketing system to assure delivery of non-transgenic wheat within reasonable tolerances to markets that require it.
4. We urge the adoption of a nationally and internationally accepted definition of biotechnologically-derived products.* We also urge international harmonization of scientific standards and trade rules.
5. We support voluntary labeling of food products, provided it is consistent with U.S. law and international trade agreements and is truthful and not misleading. We oppose government-mandated labeling of wheat products in both the U.S. and international markets based upon the presence or absence of biotechnologically-derived traits that do not differ significantly from their conventional counterpart.
6. We support the establishment of a reasonable threshold level for adventitious or accidental inclusion of biotechnologically-derived traits in bulk wheat or wheat food products in both U.S. and international markets.
7. We are confident that biotechnology will deliver significant consumer and producer benefits and we support continued biotechnology research, and product and market development. We invite valued and interested customers to join with us in a working partnership to explore the emerging biotechnology industry.

*U.S. Wheat Industry Definition: Biotechnologically-Derived (Genetically Modified Organisms)

"Genetically modified organisms (commonly referred to as "transgenic") are organisms derived from somatic cell fusion or direct insertion of a gene construct, typically but not necessarily from a sexually-incompatible species, using recombinant DNA techniques and any genetic transformation technology (e.g., bacterial vectors, particle bombardment, electroporation)."

Adopted with revisions by: USW Board of Directors on 2/4/06; NAWG Board of Directors on 2/6/06; WETEC Board of Directors on 2/5/06.